

WHAT I CLAIM IS:

1. A method for providing a voice chat room service over one or more telephone networks, the method comprising the steps of:

- 5 (a) receiving a call from a caller;
- (b) verifying whether the caller is a subscriber of the service; and
- (c) routing the caller to a chat room if the caller is a subscriber.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of inviting the caller to be a subscriber if the caller is not a subscriber.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of supplying the caller with a trial membership.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of offering the caller with two or more chat rooms to choose from.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of routing the caller to a chat room selected by the caller.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing the caller with a user ID number.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of routing the caller to a private chat room when the user ID number is received from the caller.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of retrieving information associated with the caller.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the information can be retrieved from one or more of a home location register, a visitor location register, and a service control point.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the chat room is moderated.

5 11. A method for providing a voice chat room service over one or more telephone networks, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving a call from a caller;
- (b) retrieving information associated with the caller;
- (c) verifying whether the caller is a subscriber of the service;
- 10 (d) inviting the caller to be a subscriber if the caller is not a subscriber;
- (e) supplying the caller with a menu comprising two or more chat rooms; and
- (f) routing the caller to a chat room selected by the caller.

15 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the information can be retrieved from one or more of a home location register, a visitor location register, and a service control point.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein one or more of the chat rooms is moderated.

20 14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of moderating the one or more chat rooms using rules associated with the voice chat room service.

15. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of charging the caller for the voice chat room service.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the charging step is based on time spent by the caller in the one or more chat rooms.

5 17. The method of claim 15, wherein the charging step comprises collecting a fixed fee from the caller regardless of time spent by the caller in the one or more chat rooms.

18. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of prompting the caller for a password.

10 19. A method for providing a voice chat room service over one or more telephone networks, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) facilitating a conversation in a public chat room comprising a plurality of chatters; and

15 (b) leading at least two chatters of the plurality of chatters to a private chat room when user ID numbers associated with the at least two chatters are received,

wherein the user ID numbers can be received from one or more of the at least two chatters.

20 20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step charging one or more of the at least two chatters with additional fees for the private chat room.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of retrieving one or more of the user ID numbers if the at least two chatters do not remember the one or more of the user ID numbers.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein each of the at least two chatters must
5 provide his or her own user ID number to enter the private chat room.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein one or more of the user ID numbers are permanent ID numbers.

24. The method of claim 19, wherein one or more of the user ID numbers are temporary ID numbers.

25. The method of claim 19, wherein one or more of the user ID numbers
10 can be used only once.

26. A system for providing a voice chat room service over one or more telephone networks, the system comprising:

- (a) a plurality of chat rooms;
- (b) means for verifying whether a caller is a subscriber; and
- (c) means for routing the caller to one of the plurality of chat rooms.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein each of the plurality of chat rooms is associated with a conference bridge circuit.

28. The system of claim 26, wherein one or more of the plurality of chat
20 rooms are public chat rooms.

29. The system of claim 26, wherein one or more of the plurality of chat rooms are private chat rooms.

30. The system of claim 29, further comprising means for leading at least two chatters to a private chat room.

31. The system of claim 26, further comprising means for moderating conversation in one or more of the plurality of chat rooms.

5 32. The system of claim 26, further comprising means for transferring a chatter from a first chat room to a second chat room among the plurality of chat rooms.